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## A PLEA FOR THE COMMONPLACE.

By HALLIDAY ROGERS.

If, from the general catalogue of humanity, there could be constructed a 'valued file' in which all mankind should be classified in descriptive groups, there are perhaps few of us who would not be somewhat disappointed if we found ourselves included under the category of the Commonplace. You, dear reader, would not like to be described as a man whose most prominent characteristic is mediocrity. Are you not, indeed, convinced in your heart of hearts that such a description would not be accurate? You do not claim genius for yourself, perhaps, and are content to be left out of the list of the great ones of the earth; but to be commonplace is to be uninteresting, and that certainly neither you nor any one of us has ever found himself to be. In fact, it is just because we have all our lives found our own personality intensely interesting, that we find it difficult to accept the fact that other people fail to recognise this pre-eminent interest, and even find matter demanding more attentive consideration in their own bosoms. Our neighbours are often unappreciative; they allow our wittiest and wisest sayings to fall to the ground unobserved; yet when people are accustomed to regard their own scintillations as the most brilliant imaginable, we cannot wonder if they refuse to blink when we sparkle.

On the whole, then, since the fine aroma of distinction which suffuses our personality is in most of us so exceedingly rare that it fails to tickle any nostril but our own, are we not generally well content to dwell at peace on the quiet level of the commonplace? Do we not feel our hearts wonderfully well satisfied with the fireside joys of life, and something better than ambition gratified by the loyalty of our little realm of home, where all we say and do is irradiated, not with the tinsel sparkle of fashion, but with the purer light of love? Why should we desire a homage which, in effect, only raises a barrier between us and our fellow-men? The

isolation of superiority is but a lonely business after all, and most of us find that an arm-chair beside our neighbours is both more comfortable and more sociable than a pedestal over their heads.

Human affection seems always to twine itself most closely about the commonplace. Striking qualities in those about us excite our admiration, and may awake our love, but any qualities, through long familiarity, cease at length to be striking, and, in course of time, the glittering glacier-peaks of admiration melt into the warmer river of affection. Is it not amid the uneventful quietude of our own homes, among the people who of all the world are most familiar to us, that our love finds its truest repose? I question if the wife of our most brilliant senator loves her husband best when he is swaying the hearts of thousands with the magnificent power of his eloquence, and not rather when she sees him sitting by the fireside in his slippers, with his five-year-old darling on his knee, listening, with a keener interest than he can always command in the House of Commons, to her reading of the time-honoured remarks regarding 'Tom's cat that sat on the mat.'

Most of us have, at some time or other, been acquainted with families in which there was one member, generally on the female side, whose voice was seldom heard, and whose health was rarely inquired after; one whose existence was almost unnoticed except when her absence aroused an impatient sense of inconvenience in those on whom her work devolved, and whose functions in the family life seemed negative till they were intermitted, when they became painfully positive for other people; one, in short, whose mission in life seemed to be to wash the cups from which others had quaffed their *elixir vite*. Very often she is an elder sister—a gentle soul, little given to expression, but only to a repression whose power would be terrific were it not self-directed and invisible. She helps her mother with the children's

mending, helps the children with their lessons, and, as these same children grow up into youth and maidenhood, and push her, without any malevolent intention, prematurely into the mysterious shadow of 'the shelf,' she looks after her sisters' marriages and sees her brothers through their college scrapes and experimental love-affairs, settling down finally into an old maiden auntie of universal benevolence and an unlimited supply of sweets. She is, to quote George Eliot, 'one of those benignant lovely souls who, without astonishing the public and posterity, make a happy difference in the lives close around them, and in this way lift the average of earthly joy.' And this maiden auntie, in the eyes of all around her, is a very commonplace person. She has no special talents or accomplishments, but has all the ordinary ones in an ordinary degree. She is not much accustomed to any one's admiration, least of all her own; nevertheless she is a very comfortable person to have in the house, and, commonplace as she is, the day comes when we find out that she has had more of our love than any of her brilliant relatives.

Shakespeare himself has taught us to love the commonplace. When Macbeth and Banquo have fairly rid their good old king alike of 'malice domestic' and of 'foreign levy,' and have come to receive their well-merited thanks and praise from their liege lord, how does he greet them? Macbeth, 'Bellona's bridegroom,' 'Valour's minion,' advances with stately dignity and is received with nervous gratitude, respectful appreciation, and just a suspicion of timid reserve. Behind him follows Banquo, a type of that cautious courage and honest prudence which characterise the ordinary Scotsman of to-day, with no ceremonial airs or princely dignity, but beaming with honest delight in his victory, his leal heart throbbing with gladness at the good service he has done his king. And while Macbeth stands by receiving congratulations with dignified courtesy and holding his head high with an incipient regal pride, Banquo is swallowing down a lump in his throat as he feels himself enfolded in old Duncan's loving arms. There is no taint of crime as yet upon Macbeth; he is a striking figure in the eyes of his countrymen, famous for his valour, lauded and admired. Banquo is only a brave soldier with little but the accident of rank to distinguish him from many a score as brave and true as he. Yet which of us having, with little emotion, made his best bow to a distinguished personage, would not, like Duncan, turn with more heartfelt warmth to receive the hand-grasp of a brother man?

There is a novelist of the present day who, perhaps above any other, has succeeded in writing books whose every sentence is pregnant with a far-reaching meaning. His characters are ready with valuable epigrams before they have got down-stairs in the morning and sparkle with repartee through sultry afternoons. The cabman at the gate accompanies his salute with an original apothegm charged with immortal wisdom. Lovers attain to the crucial point of a proposal through a labyrinthine discussion on international politics and an interchange of theories regarding the philosophy of govern-

ment. The theories are interesting, the conversations brilliant; some critics place the author in the forefront of the novelists of our century. Certainly in cleverness it would not be easy to find his rival, and few will deny him the meed of admiration which that thoroughly occidental and modern quality deserves. But even cleverness palls sometimes, and we are glad to lay down the book to discuss the weather with our friend Simpleman, or listen to Mrs Commonbody's remarks on the quality of the milk supplied by the new Dairymen's Co-operative Society. Intellectual, and altogether superior as you are, dear reader, I cannot suppose that you are indifferent to the repose of a pipe of tobacco (or, madam, a cup of tea) and foolishness. A multitudinously convoluted fire-cracker, exploding in epigram every thirty seconds, may be an object worthy of our attentive consideration; but if the period of study be prolonged beyond due limits, there is a risk of wearying the ear and permeating the atmosphere with a thirst-breeding odour of explosives. And then, what more welcome to the thirsty lips than a draught of clear, cold water? What more refreshing to the wearied intellect than a whiff of the pure, all-pervading ozone of the commonplace? Who, however highly he has appreciated the conversational gymnastics of our author's *dramatis personæ*, will not find it wonderfully restful to turn his back upon them for a while and stroll with good Gilbert White into his garden at Selborne and follow with interest, though possibly not with excitement, his calculations of the varying inches in the daily peregrinations of his tortoise? We find a sweeter nature awakened in ourselves in considering the domestic gossip of the hedge-sparrow than in tracing the complicatedascalities of even the most magnificent of adventurers, and we listen with a more loving interest to the amorous chirpings of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren than to any description of the intricate matrimonial entanglements of even the most highly cultured of county gentlemen. The fire-cracker may be the result of centuries of science and civilisation, while the cold water was as good in Eden as it is to-day; yet the cooling draught is always refreshing to the thirsty soul, while the fire-cracker does not always afford the exact species of exhilaration demanded by the jaded spirit. Not that fire-crackers are to be despised! Which of us, being present at a pyrotechnic display, would not willingly help to swell the admiring chorus of Oh! and Ah! Only, exaltation is apt to react in exhaustion, and most of us find our repose in the commonplace. Life cannot be all fire-cracker.

'Man, do you know, I like your books,' was the compliment a writer received lately from a friend. 'They're so thoroughly like the thing'—that is, like the *ordinary* thing. The same writer in discussing a prominent preacher chanced to remark: 'Yes, one cannot help enjoying him, he knows so well how to meet the needs of everyday life.' Again the importance of the commonplace! And the preacher, chatting with his wife about the dinner where he had met a cabinet minister, might, quite naturally, say: 'After all, my dear, a cabinet

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minister is quite a tame animal—conducts himself just like an ordinary mortal; and of course we like him all the better for that.'

Such are the common opinions of civilised society—the common opinions, which, whether we like it or not, are generally accepted as true. Any satisfaction we may have in the occasional appearance of the Eccentric as a variety presupposes the existence of the Ordinary as a basis rendering such phenomena possible—as the neutral background which lends brilliancy to the gayer figures—or as the conception of Silence, without which we could have no definition of Sound. In all cases Eccentricity must preserve some hold on the Ordinary, or cut its possessor adrift from sympathy with the wider life of mankind—a result which would make even the eccentricity of genius intolerable. For what is the life of any man worth if it is not in sympathetic touch with the lives of his fellow-men, and what will preserve this sympathetic touch but familiarity with the joys and sorrows, the loves and hates, the everyday emotions of humanity, which, though capable of infinite diversity in individual history, are yet the common heritage of the race, and produce, in the larger view, a universal identity of experience in all nations and ages? For, after all, surely it is true that only in so far as our hearts beat, stroke for stroke, in unison with the great, common heart of humanity, can there be any true greatness in us at all.

## THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN.\*

### CHAPTER XVIII.

THEN came the second opportunity. It was three weeks after the first. The occasion was the first reading—or was it the second?—or a Bill for the prohibition of more than five—or was it fifty?—hours' labour in the day, or something to that effect.

However, we knew it was coming, and Robert got me a seat in the Speaker's Gallery, where I sat during the questions with as much patience as I could command. The Gallery was not crowded; the strangers were people up from the country, with a few Americans. They had opera-glasses, and whispered the names of the members whose faces they knew. The House of Commons is one of the sights of London, which is the reason why so few Londoners ever go to it. As for the House of Lords, I wonder how many Londoners have ever seen that august body in deliberation.

The Bill was introduced with a somewhat short and self-excusing speech. I wish I could remember what the Bill really proposed. Not that it matters, however. As the subject was not attractive, the House rapidly thinned. There, again; we are the most political people in the world, but the moment a subject is introduced which deals with the realities of life, the

welfare of the millions, the case of the unemployed, the rule of India, the agricultural depression, the safety of the empire, the condition of the navy, the weakness of the army, the departure of trade, the silver question, the House is swiftly and suddenly thinned or emptied. I suppose the reason is, that the human brain can only stand a certain amount of dull speech, and that these subjects generally fall into the hands of dull and uninteresting speakers. I really do not know what this speaker said. Presently he sat down. Then Robert arose. I think I was more anxious about his success than he was himself. He was perfectly calm and self-possessed; in his hand he held a small bundle of papers; he stood before them all, a striking presence; and he began speaking slowly, with measured phrase, and with his rich, musical voice, which at once commanded attention. Of all the gifts of oratory, the most useful is a rich and flexible voice. Then his first speech, of three weeks ago, now almost forgotten, was again remembered; and the House became quickly filled again.

He spoke on a labour question, from his own point of view, as one who was at once a craftsman and an employer. 'I am, myself,' he said, with the pride of a duke, and the appearance of a gentleman of ancient lineage—'I am, myself, a Master Craftsman.'

Then he proceeded, from his own experience, and from quotations from Blue-books, to marshal his facts, and to set forth his arguments. I did not listen: it was enough for me to let that rolling music of his voice play about my ears: and to watch its effects upon the faces below. Could he grip those faces? He could. Could he move those faces? He could. The average Parliamentary face is singularly cold. One might as well expect that one wave out of all the others could move a hard rock. Yet Robert moved that rocky face. Could he make those faces smile? He could.

I think, not being a critic, that my cousin, like Mr Gladstone, possessed the wonderful gift of being able to invest the baldest facts and the most intricate figures with interest and charm. Like a novelist, he made them personal. He connected figures with men, and brought facts into touch with humanity. And this he did, as it seemed, spontaneously, without effort or any appearance of lecturing. In the House of Commons a man must not be a lecturer, but an orator. The lecturer is necessarily a critic or a teacher. As lecturer, without imagination, he explains carefully how the orator, the poet, the novelist, the dramatist, produces his effects. He knows exactly, and can tell all the world how it is done—the trick of it. Yet he cannot produce the thing himself. Therefore he is of no use in the House. The orator, poet, dramatist, novelist, on the other hand, produces these effects continually. Yet he cannot tell you how he does it.

Robert, then, had this gift of making things attractive. He spoke for an hour or more. The members remained in respectful silence until he worked them up into producing their signs of approbation, of which the House is never chary when it is moved.

Lady Frances gave a dinner party—a political

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dinner—at which some of the heads of the Party were present. And she invited Robert. Among her guests was old Lord Caerleon, to whom he had already been introduced. It was a large party, and Robert's place was down below, among the younger men, who were civil to him. But, of course, in the conversation, it was impossible for him not to feel that he was an outsider.

After dinner, however, Lord Caerleon again talked with him apart. He talked as one who knows the game, and as one who has played it, and now looked on rather tired of it.

'I have read your speeches, Mr Burnikel,' he said, much as a schoolmaster may speak of a boy's set of verses. 'As reported they were fair. I am told that they produced—ah!—some effect upon the House. It is said you have a good delivery, and a good voice. Is that so?'

'It is so,' said Robert calmly. 'I have a good voice by nature, and a good delivery by art.'

'Yes,' Lord Caerleon looked just a little astonished at a young man who thus immediately claimed these gifts. 'A good voice is a great thing. You have begun well, Mr Burnikel. But a good beginning, in the House, counts for nothing. The House is filled, to me, with the ghosts of men who, in my recollection, made a good beginning.'

'I have made a good beginning, Lord Caerleon; and, with your permission, I intend not to become a ghost at all.'

'Very good. Very good, indeed. But, Mr Burnikel, how are you going to get on? Permit me—I understand for some mysterious reasons of your own, you still wish to be considered an Independent member. You told me so, if I remember rightly, in this house two or three weeks ago.'

'That is so. I am returned by my constituents as an Independent member.'

'I don't think it matters much what they think. But I suppose you talked the usual stuff—voting to order, no conscience, changing opinions, and the rest of it.'

'All the rest of it,' said Robert quietly.

'Of course you did. Now then, Mr Burnikel, let us go into the question of Party for a few minutes—not the whole question of Party, on which you have read—or ought to have read—your Constitutional History—but that part of the question that affects you personally.'

'You do me great honour.'

'I talk to you, sir, because I think that you may possibly—I don't know—turn out an acquisition to either party. Otherwise, of course, one cannot at my age, and with my experience, pretend to take the least interest in the average member. I take the personal side, then. You propose, I believe, to make a career in politics.'

'I do.'

'Lady Frances tells me—you told me so yourself, if I remember rightly—that you are extremely ambitious. I am pleased to hear it. Well, you cannot be too ambitious. Get me a chair: I think I will sit down. So—thank you. Ambition,' he went on, 'the desire for personal distinction, is one of the finest gifts that a boy can receive. I always had it. You

would, I daresay, if we were to compare symptoms, and if you were dissected, present the same phenomena. And my highest ambitions have been gratified, but not satiated. Believe me, sir, the ambitious man enjoys the winning of every step—one after the other; he is never satiated; he can never say "enough."

'Well, sir,' said Robert, 'you have never had occasion to regret having embarked upon this splendid career. You have been First Lord of the Treasury. Well, my lord, what you desired and attained, that I have the audacity also to desire. Perhaps I shall attain it.'

'Not if you continue in your present course. The one condition which was imposed upon me is also imposed upon you. You must rise in the customary manner by becoming a faithful servant of your Party.'

'That we will see,' said Robert, obstinate and incredulous.

'How then do you propose to climb? My dear sir, before you rises an inaccessible precipice. There are only two ladders. Would you fly?'

'I wish to climb by doing good work.'

'My case, too—exactly my case. I kept on saying that while I was at Oxford. It is really a very fine thing to think, though it is a very foolish and, indeed, a boyish thing to say. Mr Burnikel, there is only one possible way of climbing; and that is by one of the only two ladders. No other way exists—believe me, young man. If there were any other way it would have been found out long ago.'

'There was the case of John Bright.'

'He had to join the Party, remember. John Bright was in every way exceptional; he wanted neither money, nor place, nor power, nor rank. You, I should imagine, want everything.'

Robert was silent.

'So that's settled. If you want to climb, enter by the usual gate, and you will find the ladder waiting for you. Let us pass on to consider the noble work by which you desire to make a mark in history. Noble work, for a politician, means great and beneficent measures. You, as an Independent member, would never be able to pass any considerable measure: not any single measure of the least importance. Why? because all great measures are adopted, as soon as it is found possible to pass them, by the Government. As for moving public opinion so as to make these measures possible, that is done by essayists, leader writers, authors, poets, dramatists, and other intelligent persons, who nowadays prevent a Minister from being original in his ideas. You, as an Independent member, would have no chance at all—not the least ghost of a chance—even of introducing a Bill.'

'I always thought'—

'Think so no longer. Look about you, and face the facts. They are these. An Independent member, whatever he could formerly accomplish, which wasn't much, will never more be able to introduce or to pass any measure, good or bad; he can never become a leader in the House; he can never have the least chance of proving himself a statesman: all he can hope to do is to get the House to listen to him, and through the House, the outside world;



and believe me, sir, on the most favourable condition possible, you will never, as an Independent member, acquire half, or a quarter of the influence over your country that is enjoyed by an anonymous leader writer on a great daily paper.

Robert made no reply.

'Will such a position content you, sir? Does such a position gratify your ambitions? Why, you have just told me what they are. Pray, sir,' Lord Caerleon looked up sharply with his keen eyes under his shaggy eyebrows, 'will this content you?'

'No; it will not.'

'Let us go on, then. You have told me that you have been pleased, in the education of your Shadwell constituents, to speak of party allegiance as a slavery, a stifling of conscience, a suppression of manhood, and so on. You did talk like this?'

'Certainly. It is the only way of talking.'

'So you think. Now let us look at it in this way. There is a party which in the main clings to the old things, and only admits change when new and irresistible forces command change. There is another party which is always desiring change, because they think that things might look prettier, or because things would be more logical, or because things might help the people, or themselves, by being changed. In the main, every measure belongs to one or other of these parties. Is not that so?'

'Perhaps.'

'Every measure which is brought forward by one or other of the two sides, has been talked about, advocated, discussed in newspapers, in magazines—everywhere—long before. It is brought forward at last when one party has made up its mind to support it, and the other to oppose it. The House is divided into two camps, in which are the two armies. The Bill is proposed and meets its fate. All is done in order, according to the rules of the game. You understand?'

'Of course.'

'What would you have? A House filled with a mob of six hundred undisciplined separate individuals—all clamouring together—all fighting to bring forward some fad and fancy of their own. What a House would that be? What kind of legislation would you expect of such a House?'

Robert, at the moment, could suggest no kind of legislation.

'Suppose you think over the matter from this point of view, Mr Burnikel. Construct, that is, in your imagination, the House filled with Independent members and see how it will work. Oblige me by doing this.'

Robert bowed gravely.

'I daresay that you have already recognised this view of the question. But there are times when the mind seems more especially open to the apprehension of plain truths. This is perhaps one of those occasions. The very name of Lady Frances fills one with the idea of Party.'

'I will, at least, consider your view.'

'Well—and now, Mr Burnikel, I want to speak quite plainly, and, I take it, you are not a man to be offended with plain speech. Very

good. You are not a rich man, I believe; nor a man of family.'

'I have already told you that I am a boat-builder—a Master Craftsman, and my income is small.'

'I have heard as much. Well: your birth and position should be no bar to your ambitions. You have heard that I began with much the same disadvantage. You will very soon find your way about: you are in excellent hands so long as Lady Frances takes an interest in you: and I hope that you will discover, as I did, that this is the very best country in the world for a young man of ability, and courage, and ambition.' He rose from the chair. 'So, I have said nearly all I wished to say.'

'Thank you,' said Robert humbly. He was touched by the comparison of the man who had succeeded with himself and his own case.

'Not quite all. Some of the people think that you may possibly be a coming man. I'm sure I don't know.' Lord Caerleon, who had worked himself up into some eagerness, became all at once limp and tired. 'There are too many wrecks. I have had too many disappointments. But—I say—I don't know. Anything may happen. I don't think I could have made such a clever speech as yours of the other day. I don't know. Anyhow, we are watching you. And—I don't know—it depends entirely on your own ability and common-sense. I believe you may find friends and backers—when you give up nonsense, and are content to play the game according to the rules. Good-evening, Mr Burnikel.'

He inclined his head with dignity; the interview was at an end.

'I was very glad,' said Lady Frances, after this conversation, 'to see Lord Caerleon talking so long and so earnestly with you. It is a sign that he takes a personal interest in you. Believe me, Mr Burnikel, it is a great honour to have been able to interest that old Parliamentary hand.'

'I am indeed very much obliged to him for the trouble he took to convert me to his views.'

'I will tell you a secret, as people always say when they tell a thing that everybody knows. Lord Caerleon came here this evening on purpose to meet you, and have the talk with you.'

'Did he, really?' Robert, who was not to be dazzled, blushed like a girl.

'Let us talk again about this subject, Mr Burnikel. I cannot talk freely to-night. Come to-morrow afternoon—it is not my day—and we will consider the thing calmly, and from your own personal point of view. Oh! I understand it perfectly—but ambition—Mr Burnikel—ambition must use the appointed ways. We belong to our own generation: we are subject to the conditions of our time: and—*enfin*—you must not waste what might be—and shall be—a great career, for the sake of a visionary scruple.'

Robert departed in a thoughtful mood. The observations made by the noble Lord went straight home. If, by remaining an Independent member, he obtained neither power nor place, nor even the introduction of the great, remarkable, never-before-imagined measures of which,

in ignorance of his possibilities, he had vaguely dreamed, he might as well keep out of Parliament altogether, and go on haranguing the working-men of Shadwell.

The day after this dinner, Frances wrote me a letter.

"I had on the table a copy of the *Morning Herald*. It contained a leader against him and his last speech. Quite a leader of the old stamp; I had thought the trick of writing such leading articles was gone. Every sentence perverted; every phrase misinterpreted, and made to mean something different. A masterpiece of party malignity, a leading article, in fact, that cannot fail to do our friend all the good in the world.

"I handed him the paper. He had not yet seen it. Well, you would hardly believe that a real politician could be so young and so foolish. He actually flew into a rage over it; he lost, for a moment, command of himself.

"My dear friend," I said, "the thing is so exaggerated that I thought you had written it yourself."

"Written it myself? Myself?"

"Written it yourself. Don't you understand, Mr Barnikel, that what the young politician wants, is plenty of abuse from the other side. There is a story of a certain aged statesman who very kindly advanced a young man of the opposite bench, in whom he took a fatherly interest, by personally abusing him for a whole twelve months. In three years that young man was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Now, if we could only find some good man on the other side to abuse you—it is difficult, but it might be done."

"Rise through abuse?"

"Certainly, I will tell you why. First, because it keeps people talking of you, thinking of you, and giving you increased importance in the Party; and next, because the abuse is always grossly exaggerated, and people compare it with your printed utterances. If you were rich enough, you might pay a journalist so much a year to abuse you twice a week!"

"He threw down the paper. 'Mean artifice!' he cried. 'Does this also belong to Party?'"

"(Eleven o'clock).

"I have just opened a note from him. He has joined us. Yes. The Independent member has vanished.

"Dear Lady Frances," he says, "I have thought over what you said this afternoon; you have convinced and converted me. I am now quite sure that the only way of working the machinery of Government is by means of Party. You have shown me that I have been quite wrong. I shall join your Party as one of its private soldiers, and I shall set myself to learn the obedience and discipline of which you spoke." There, George, I have converted him. Now it was not by my arguments at all, but by those of Lord Caerleon that he was converted. There were all the signs of conviction on his face last night after that conversation. I thought, indeed, of inviting him to sit down on the stool of repentance before the world. But do you think he is capable of confessing himself converted by a man? Never. By a woman, perhaps, although he is too much

absorbed in his own ambition to think much about women. Never by a man. I am contented, however, with my share of the work. You made your cousin a gentleman, my dear George. You gave him manners. At first, I plainly see, he was probably little better than a self-satisfied prig of the boorish sort; a lower middle-class, prejudiced, book-learned, ignorant prig; yet with wonderful capacities. I shall make him a model statesman of the modern kind. What else can we, between us, do for him?"

"Well, my dear Frances," I said to myself, folding up the letter, 'the next thing you might do for him—if you would, just to oblige me—is to make him a model husband, and so get him out of my way.'

### SOME FACTS ABOUT THE OPIUM HABIT.

WHETHER or not the recent Royal Commission on opium has satisfied any one, it has at least supplied the public with information which is interesting, even if it is disproportionate to the time and labour involved in collecting it. The Commission opened its inquiry on 8th September 1893, and its Report is dated 16th April 1895. It visited Calcutta, Patna, Benares, Lucknow, Ambala, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Jeypore, Ajmer, Indore, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Bombay, and Burma. It examined seven hundred and twenty-three witnesses—four hundred and sixty-six Indians and Chinese, and two hundred and fifty-seven Europeans—of all sorts and conditions, from missionaries down to Lieutenant-governors. And, finally, it produced seven solid volumes of report and connected papers. It is not proposed in the present article to reopen the discussion of the many vexed questions which the Commission may fairly be held to have closed; but simply to glean a few grains of information which may make some aspects of the question plainer, or, at least, throw a little light on the habits of life of those vast masses of our fellow-men, with whom we westerns have scarcely anything in common, save the most general attributes of humanity.

In the first place, what is opium? It is a very common *materia medica*. Its name is in common use, nearly always with a sinister meaning. For we think of De Quincey, driven to the habit of opium-taking by toothache, and continuing it, till he drank in one day a number of wine-glasses of laudanum, which we will not mention for fear of falling under the condemnation of the Psalmist. Or we think of Coleridge's splendid genius sapped and spoiled by it. Or we think of the even more melancholy *morphinomanie* of the dainty Parisian ladies who figure in the pages of M. Hervieu. And then we are, and naturally, filled with righteous indignation, and talk about Our National Crime. But let us first of all see

what opium is. Every one knows that it is an extract prepared from the juice of the poppy head, and most people know that its characteristic element is morphine. Opium is, as a matter of fact, a substance containing some eighteen active principles, sixteen of which—though they have very high-sounding names—are of no consequence. We need only consider the two chief constituents, morphine and anarcotine. The latter is an alkaloid of the nature of quinine, and with the same tonic qualities; it is commonly called *narcotine*, but as it contains no narcotic properties, the name is misleading, and should be abandoned. The percentage of morphine and anarcotine in the three chief kinds of opium in use in the world is shown in the following table:

	Morphia.	Anarcotine.
Patna Opium.....	3.98	6.36
Malwa " .....	4.61	5.14
Smyrna " .....	8.27	1.94

This consideration reveals two interesting facts. The opium which is in medical use in Europe is Smyrna opium; that from which almost all the drinking and smoking extracts in use in India are prepared, is Patna opium. In other words, De Quincey's opium contains at least *twice as much morphia* as ordinary Indian opium. And further experiments made by the Government Analyst at Hongkong—and published in the *Gazette of India*—tend to show that in China at all events—where, however, opium is habitually smoked, not drunk—the morphine is not the element for the sake of which the drug is taken. For it was found that Indian opium—which has the lowest percentage of morphine—is the most highly prized, and a smoker of nine years' standing, to whom various samples were submitted, without any remark, for his opinion, pronounced against those which contained twenty to twenty-five per cent. of morphine, in favour of those containing the lowest percentage. The conclusion is, that we must not judge entirely by De Quincey.

The other fact is even more interesting. In 1857 it occurred to Dr Palmer at Ghazipur to treat malarial fever with anarcotine instead of with quinine. He was markedly successful, and the drug is now in common use as an antiperiodic. But, as we have seen, the characteristic of Indian opium is the preponderance in it of precisely this element. Can we then infer that opium is a prophylactic against malarial fever? To a certain extent we can, for statistics show that those who take daily forty-five grains and upwards of opium, take enough anarcotine thereby to protect them absolutely against malarial poison, while any one taking over sixteen grains will be more or less fortified. It may be mentioned, also, that the morphine element contributes its share as a prophylactic. In the light of these facts, it is interesting to note that in many districts opium-consumption bears a close relation to the greater or less prevalence of malaria. In Assam, for example, in the damp and low-lying country on both

banks of the Brahmaputra, the average annual consumption, per head, is three hundred and fifty-seven grains, the average for the whole province being one hundred and forty-one; and in the Bhagalpur district of the Patna division, the most malarious part has forty-two per cent. of the opium shops of the district for only twenty-seven per cent. of the population. One of the medical witnesses gave the following lively description of the conditions of life in Eastern Bengal. 'When a man wants to build a house, he first of all digs a tank, and with the earth from which he has dug the tank he raises a mound, and on the top of that mound he places his house. The elevation of that mound depends entirely upon the height to which the annual floods rise. The floods rise with fair regularity; but sometimes they go two or three inches higher than the average, and then the inhabitants of those houses have to live on rafts inside their houses, and their cattle are tethered up to their bellies in water. These people have generally no boats. They paddle about on rafts made of the plantain-tree, and the boys go to school in what I call wash-hand basins. They are earthen *gumlas*—earthenware pots. The boy squats at the bottom of the gumla, and paddles to school.' These poor people are often five miles from their nearest neighbour, and some two millions of them are dependent for qualified medical aid on a single European doctor with one assistant. What wonder that opium is their household remedy, and that, when a man, disabled by malarial fever, finds that a dose of a quarter or half a grain of pure opium makes him a new man, and enables him to do the day's work without which his family would starve, he takes it.

One of the commonest uses of opium in India, and one which most strongly offends western sentiment, is its administration to infants and very young children. The evidence, given to the Commission, went to show that between sixty and ninety per cent. of the infants are dosed with it. 'The practice,' says Sir W. Roberts, 'is begun in the first few weeks or months of life, sometimes even from birth, and is continued up to the end of the second or third year. The dose is usually one-sixteenth to one-twelfth of a grain to begin with, and this is gradually increased to a quarter or half a grain, and even to one or two grains, according to the age and necessities of the child.' Sometimes it is given in the form of a pill, sometimes a sucking mother smears it on her nipple. It is given partly as a remedy for the ailments of infancy, partly to keep the child quiet. One witness gives this quite Theocritean picture of peasant life: 'A peasant woman who has to work in the fields gives her child some opium, and puts him in a basket in the corner of the hut, or, perhaps, she takes her child with her to the field, and puts him in a small basket and gives him a little opium to keep him quiet.' Fatalities and cases of poisoning rarely occur, and it should be carefully borne in mind that this practice is discontinued usually at the third year, and certainly at the fifth, and has no connection with the habit which may or

may not be formed when the child is grown up.

But opium is not only used as a medicine. It has what may be called its society use, and it is of course against this that the anti-opium movement is chiefly directed. We do not propose to discuss the matter, but simply to collect a few facts as to the occasions on which it is polite, indeed indispensable, to take opium. First of all, let it be remembered that, whereas in China opium is habitually smoked, in India it is usually drunk, and the habit of smoking it is, even by those who drink it, looked down upon as disreputable and demoralising. Its use in connection with ceremonials is commonest in the Native States, and especially among the Rajputs and allied castes. It is there an invariable feature of all the great occasions of life—betrothals, weddings, birth of a male child, first shaving of a male child's head, for twelve days after death, at reconciliations, &c. For instance, at the betrothal ceremony, it takes the place of our wedding-cake. It is provided by the bride's family, and consumed first by the bridegroom, and then by the whole company, who drink it from the palm of the host's hand. No reconciliation of enemies is possible without it: 'If either of the two parties decline to take opium, it is understood that he is not disposed to abide by his promises.' In some castes letters are begun with a prayer 'asking the addressee to take, on the writer's account, double the quantity of his daily allowance.' 'When a respectable old man dies, the use of opium in honour of his memory is indispensable. During the first eleven days after his death, when the people from the surrounding villages come in crowds to offer condolence, *kasumbha*—a decoction of opium—has to be supplied to them and their servants.' Afterwards, on the thirtieth day, a great entertainment is given, and the host's credit is proportionate to the amount of opium he distributes. Of its use on such occasions, the Maharaja of Durbhanga in his note very judiciously says that to stop it 'would be not only an unnecessary restriction on the freedom of the subject, but it might, and, I think, would, lead also to the increased consumption of alcohol. This fear was expressed by a great number of witnesses.'

Few points brought to light by the Commission are more remarkable than the conflict of opinion which exists as to the relative injuriousness of opium-smoking and drinking when carried to excess. As has already been observed, the former is the fashion in China, the latter in India, and the medical evidence varies with the fashion. It is true that Sir W. Roberts says that 'it cannot be taken to have been adequately proved that moderate opium-smoking, taken by itself, and apart from its surroundings, and from disease or semi-starvation, has any prejudicial effect on health.' Yet 'opium-smoking was strongly denounced before the Commission by Indian witnesses of all classes, many of whom were not opposed to the use of crude opium in the form of pills as a stimulant or restorative.' The opinion of medical and other officers in the farther east was almost unanimous in favour of smoking.

'I always consider that one dram swallowed will require the same treatment as three drams smoked,' writes an English doctor of twenty years' experience at Chefoo. But it seems to be universally admitted that smoking is the more *seductive* habit, which doubtless accounts for its prevalence among the Chinese. In this connection we cannot do better than quote the words of Mr Allen, Consul at Chefoo, words which will add to the desire felt by so many for the opening up and development of China by one of the Western powers: 'I firmly believe that the abuse of opium-smoking is an effect of evil, not a cause; a punishment, not a vice. Consequently, the remedies for the evils of opium-smoking to excess will be found, not by restricting or forbidding the opium trade, but by promoting among the Chinese a healthier state of things, material, mental, and moral, and thereby dissipating those feelings of *ennui* and discontent which produce the desire for the delights of opium.'

## THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF JOHN PERCIVAL.

### CHAPTER II.

THE coach was crawling softly up the hill. In daylight half of the passengers would have walked up the ascent which was within a short distance of Duntrum, but they were all benumbed with the cold and the darkness, which was so intense that John, when he looked out, could see nothing but the white speck of the lamp, travelling along a black line which might be a hedge or a wall, and was only visible as the light passed over it. It was like putting out his head into some awful abyss of nothing, his eyes hurting him in this black gloom which abolished them and their use. The big vehicle groaning under its burden crept on, labouring like some huge animal, jingling, creaking, reluctant, going on through the cold and the dark.

John shouted 'Stop! Stop!' with a stentorian voice. 'A lady has fallen out of the coach! A passenger has fallen out of the coach!' he shouted, repeating it again and again, then opening the door, got out himself, dropping upon the invisible road. But it was not till some minutes later that the coach could be brought to a standstill, and he could get possession of one of the lamps, tearing it out of its place.

'She must be lying in the road,' he said; 'she was an old woman unable to walk.' He held the lamp to the ground as if at any moment he might tread her underfoot. By this time other dark figures were detaching themselves from amidst their heaped-up wraps from the top of the coach and jumping down, stamping their feet upon the iron and ice of the frozen ruts.

'What is it? Who is it? An old body? Bless us all, an old body. She will just get her death!' There was a chorus of voices and



of warm breath going up on the still air. The guard and John, each with a lamp, walked down to the bottom of the hill, accompanied vaguely by several scarcely decipherable attendants.

'I fell asleep,' he said, explaining himself to the night, scarcely conscious of any auditor, 'and then she was sitting there close up in the corner, as she had been since we left Edinburgh, and would never speak: but when I woke up, the door was wide open, swinging, and there was nobody'—He added, after a moment, as if he had suddenly discovered that face: 'Some woman passing on the road shut to the door with a bang: and that woke me.' It seemed to him as he related this that he was telling an incident in a dream: and yet he was sure it was quite true.

'A woman on the road; did you see a woman on the road? there's few foot-passengers here at this hour of the night,' said the guard.

'I saw her as clear as I see you.' He held up his lamp instinctively to the face of the other which was bent like his own on the ground.

'One of you,' cried the guard, 'hurry up the hill and stop her if she's gone that way. She canna have gone far on this steep road. Stop her and see what she knows.'

But no wayfarer was found on the ascending road, nor could all the light of the lamps find any trace of any one who had fallen. The inhabitants of the first wayside cottage at the foot of the hill were imperiously knocked up by the guard and put upon the trace.

'We canna stop the coach whatever happens,' he cried, 'but we'll send out a search party from Duntrum immediate. How long were you sleepin'?' he added peremptorily to John, who looked at his watch in the light of the lamp and answered:

'Perhaps an hour.'

'An hour is a long time,' said the guard, knitting his brows. 'As far back as the brig we would be then, and at a smart pace, for the horses, poor things, scented their stables. Take your lantern, lad, if you have one, and go as far as that.—On ay, ye'll be paid, you needna be feared for that. Will ye come, sir, or bide? I daurna stop the coach.'

John looked into the blankness of darkness before him and shivered, but it was not this only that moved him. He felt certain that the catastrophe, whatever it was, must have happened within a much shorter time than an hour, that it had just occurred, indeed, when he woke, and when the sudden blast of the cold wind roused him with its searching chill. He felt convinced that he and his companions had already come to the furthest limits in which the accident, if it was an accident, could have occurred. His head was confused with the effort to find an explanation. What was it? After searching so far, he became convinced that the clue was not to be found on the road. Where then was it to be found? He made no answer either to this question in his own mind or to the guard, but turned back, leaving the others with the sleepy and startled cottagers, father and son, who had been roused

from their beds, for it was already late, and were reluctantly accepting the directions of the guard, whose red coat made a spot like a fire in the darkness, lighted up by the lantern which he had attached to his belt. John turned back and began to reascend the hill, throwing the flash of his lamp on every roughness of the road, and making his way back to where the coach smoked into the night, the breath of the passengers and the emanations from the horses forming a mist of life, which rose dim yet consolatory across the light of the lamp in the midst of that chill of winter and darkness. As he came up to it his foot caught upon something almost under the hindmost wheel, and he gave a loud cry, which brought every one on foot around him. He set down his lamp on the frozen ground, and they all clustered over it in a circle. It was the heavy bundle of the mail-bags strapped together, one end of the leather strap still entangled with the step of the coach. The guard pulled them up with an exclamation.

'Dod! she's trailed the mails with her,' and then he too uttered a cry, which was fierce with instant terror and dismay. 'But where's the bag from Dunscore?'

The two lamps were immediately fixed upon this new problem, and their light shone upon a circle of faces, the guard's blanched with sudden alarm, all turned towards that dark mass gleaming with its metal clasps.

'It's come loose,' said one voice; 'it'll be on the road.'

'Bah! a wheen letters,' said another; 'you'll no stop us in the cold for that.'

'It's just a simple accident,' said the third. But the guard held up to the light the ends of a strap cut through, clean and clear, evidently by some very sharp instrument.

'It's been nae woman, it's been some robber in disguise, it's been a got-up thing,' he cried, throwing a glance of suspicion at John who stood aghast, holding the lamp unconsciously quite close to the bundle of the mail-bags, and gazing at them as if there was something there that could elucidate the mystery. He began to put one thing to another confusedly in his mind.

'A got-up thing. Could it be a got-up thing? It was a woman certainly,' he said to himself but aloud, 'a woman certainly, and a small woman.'

'Maybe a laddie in a woman's dress,' said an officious bystander.

'Were there mony letters in it?' said another, with unseasonable curiosity.

'And what,' said another authoritatively, 'had the mail-bags to do in the inside of the coach?'

This question made a silence in the group, which the guard broke suddenly and loudly.

'Get back to your seats,' he said, 'and Jamie, push them to their stiffest, those beasts of yours: this has to be seen into. It's robbery on the Queen's highway,' he said, with a vague threat which cowed them all.

John got to the lodging which had been prepared for him, with a much perplexed and disturbed brain. It annoyed him beyond reason to think he had perhaps taken a mis-

chievous boy for a lady, and wasted his polite attentions upon a young thief; yet perhaps, because he did not wish to believe this, this became an idea quite impossible to him after a little thought. He could not quite tell how he came to the conclusion, but he felt perfectly confident that a woman it was, perhaps not an invalid, as appeared, nay, certainly not an invalid; he remembered now the swift movement of surprise she had made when he suddenly opened the door on her side with the soup he had taken such trouble to get for her. She had flung herself aside from the door, but it was a woman's movement, not that of a boy. And then the woman's face at the opened door, looking in one moment from outside, closing it with such a hasty bang. No doubt of that being a woman's face, a young face, a pretty face, in a glow of colour as he remembered it. Could that be the wrapped-up old rheumatic person with the poultice on her cheek? His heart gave a jump partly of self-derision, the doubt he had been! not to discover a bonnie lass even underneath the mountain of veils and wraps. He could have sworn that not the cleverest should have so taken him in. But why, after all, should that be *her*? Most likely it was somebody passing, a country maid on the road, good-natured, giving a push to the open door as she passed. Would a fugitive have shut it with a clang like that? Not likely!

John was very ready for his supper and for his bed afterwards, being young and healthy; but his sleep was very broken, and that woman's face kept looking in upon him, from between the curtains and behind the door, at every turn and toss. He began to see it, better than he had done in the real moment of seeing it; a pretty face, rather redder than was consistent with his idea of beauty, with a curious flash in the eyes, and anxious lines in the forehead. He saw it perfectly clear in those visions of the night, the hair dark and ruffled, a hood half drawn over the head, the lips apart. No doubt at all that it was a pretty face. And he remembered she glanced at him with a sort of laugh about the corners of her mouth, which changed to a look of fright as she saw him wake up. He had not thought of it at first, but certainly that was her expression, and the clang with which the door closed was probably due to that surprise. Was this the old woman with the rheumatics in her head? Could it be she who had sneaked and stormed at him, and ordered him to 'snoodle'? He kept going over and over it in his broken sleep, seeing her more clearly every time he woke, reading more and more meaning in the details of her face which came to him one by one. Were the eyes blue or brown? Was the ruffled hair light or dark? He could not make out those most essential details, yet he thought he should recognise her wherever he saw her. The glimpse he had got of her in reality seemed nothing to the light upon her which came from his dreams. It was like seeing her again and again, and getting familiar with her face. He thought that if he ever saw it again, it would haunt him all his life. But he should see it again, of that he was determined. Then

he suddenly thought to himself with a gleam of surprised pleasure what a good thing it was, after all, that he had come to Duntrum! This seemed all at once to him a good, a delightful, a most entertaining and charming thing, but, I fear, he would have been quite at a loss, if he had been asked for an explanation, to say why.

The incident, as was natural, made a great noise in the country, and there was an examination held before the sheriff at which John was the principal witness. He described the old body to the great amusement of all present, the lump on her cheek, and white edge of the plaster in which it was tied up, just showing beyond the great black muffler in which her face was enveloped, the Spanish veil, with large thick silken flowers, between the interstices of which only the fact that there was a face could be discovered, the shrill strange voice which he now felt to be assumed. And, finally, the young face that had appeared at the window.

'You were awake by it—by what?' said the questioner, 'by the sharp closing of the door?'

'Yes,' said John.

'Then, if the noise only woke you, how could you see the face of the person who made it?'

'No, it was not the noise,' said John, 'it was the blast of the cold air coming in: and then the face appeared in the open, against the night, looking up a little, catching the light of the lamp. For a moment it moved with the coach, then the door was shut.'

'Moved with the coach?' said the interrogator. 'Do you mean she was walking by the side?'

'I begin to think,' said John slowly, 'that she must have been on the step: then dropped out of sight, and shut the door.'

'Are you sure, Mr Percival,' said the sheriff, 'that the pretty face at the door was not a dream? We all know that pretty faces are part of young men's dreams: and you are not sure at which moment you awoke.'

'I did not say,' said John, 'that it was a pretty face.'

'Ah!' said the sheriff.

'Still it is true: it was so: and young: but it was not a dream. I saw the lady quite clearly.'

'It was a lady, then? You thought at first it might be a country lass passing.'

'I am not sure that it was a lady,' said John, 'but I certainly think so—I—' He paused, then with a slight start of astonishment, seemed to stop an exclamation that was on his lips.

'What is the matter?' cried his questioner. 'You are not so sure as you were that you saw any young woman at all?'

'I am perfectly sure—on my oath, and with complete recollection of what happened, that I saw,' cried John, 'exactly what I have said, a young woman with a great deal of expression in her face, and a hood on her head, looking in at me for a moment through the open door.' He did not look at the sheriff as he spoke, but strained his eyes, interrogating the faces before him between the table at which he stood and the door. His heart had not

quieted yet from that start, though his mind had. He had thought he saw her again, the same face, and had been startled, and then had said to himself how unlikely it was, and looking again had found there was no such thing before him, among the score or two of people who had assembled in the room. There were very few women at all: it must have been a temporary illusion, for certainly now there was no one visible who resembled that face at all: but his heart continued to beat, though he succeeded in quieting his mind and reason as I have described.

Many curious things happened in connection with this mystery. The letters which had been posted in Dunscore on that night—as was proved by the postmarks—almost without exception reached their destination within a day or two, but with the Edinburgh postmark added to that of Dunscore. There was an exception, and that was one letter addressed to the Duntrum Bank, in which John by this time had taken his place, a favoured supernumerary, with all the prestige of his Edinburgh antecedents and connection, to learn the country work. It was curious that the incident with which his name was already associated, and which formed so remarkable a part of his scanty and young experience, should thus be brought under his notice again. He heard nothing else spoken of for the first month, at least, of his dwelling in Duntrum. The one lost letter was from a small bank in the little town of Dunscore. It had enclosed several bank bills to be collected and other papers of commercial value, and was in fact, perhaps, the only important missive in the stolen bag, judging from a commercial point of view. From the discussions in the bank where he acquired the last information on the subject, John learnt that various unfortunate persons had reason to rejoice over the loss of this letter. Two or three poor men almost bankrupt had their ruin staved off for a moment, and the dread period of protested bills and mercantile dishonour deferred at least for a time: and there were many whisperings and questions whether any of the persons concerned could have been capable of so bold a stroke. But even the inventive genius of a country town, always so bold in attributing guilt, could not come to any agreement in respect to this. It could not even be said that any one was suspected. The thing had been accomplished so mysteriously in such a complete way, without leaving a trace, that the local inquisition was completely baffled. John found with mingled annoyance and relief that his own vision of the young woman at the coach door was not relied upon. He had probably dreamt it, most people thought. Like the sheriff, the community concluded that it was nothing wonderful if a young man suddenly awakened should think he saw a girl's face; probably he had been dreaming about some particular girl. And in those days the hypothesis of a woman having done any deed of note was rarely accepted and with difficulty. The natural rôle of the woman in those days was to keep quiet and behind backs. She was not suspected of taking any leading part. The wrapped-up invalid in the country whom the guard and several other

persons besides John had seen, must have been a man in this disguise everybody was certain. It was not a thing that could have been done by a woman. No, no; no woman could have had the nerve to do it, the people in Duntrum said.

All these things John Percival turned over in his mind, and examined as much as he had the opportunity of doing. He listened to all the gossip about all the persons concerned, and especially of those who might be supposed to be advantaged by the loss of the mail-bag, with very keen interest, and formed within himself one hypothesis after another, several of which perished in the framing, so difficult was it to make the circumstances fit in. And in the meantime he himself became a personage of great importance, and much sought after in the gentlest society of Duntrum, which was understood to be very exclusive and difficult of access. John was the representative of Percival's Bank, one of the oldest establishments in Edinburgh, which was very much in his favour. And he was, besides, gifted with a story to tell, which was almost a greater recommendation. Over and over again during that winter he was required to give his famous description of his companion in the coach, of his own attempted attentions, the soup he procured in vain, the wraps that were kicked away. There was one circumstance which he never mentioned, but which touched his heart with the strangest thrill of kindness, which was that his tribute of the oranges had disappeared along with the old lady. It was as if she had not liked to hurt his feelings by rejecting his benevolences altogether. This curious experience inspired John with a slight inclination towards the dramatic which he had not been conscious of before, and almost made him believe before the season was over that perhaps if he had been left to follow his own devices, he might have been a great actor as well as a great artist or poet. At last, however, he got over his inclination to start at every girl's face he met and examine it critically on the score of a fancied likeness to the young woman of his vision. He said that most girls were like each other, as his final conclusion. They had all fine complexions in Duntrum.

Nevertheless, there was one evening at one of the many little dances that were given in that cheerful place, when John's composure was very much put to the test. He was taken to this entertainment by his own chief comrade and crony, young Maxwell, the son of the resident partner in the Duntrum Bank, who was in something of John's own position, more highly favoured than the other clerks and naturally one of the *élite*.

'Come, and I'll show you the flower of Wittisdale, the rose of Duntrum,' said this young man. 'She has been away in Edinburgh the whole winter; but mind you, none of your cantrips here. I warn you off before you see her. I'll have no interlopers cutting me out. Turn the heads of all the others if you like, with your acting and your stories, but this one is mine.'

'They are all just as like each other as apples in a basket,' said the cynic John.

Nevertheless, when he went lightly into the brightly lighted room following his friend, John in a moment felt his heart leap into his throat: for there standing a little behind the mistress of the house with a curious little air of consciousness which seemed to him to prove that she was on her guard and ready for the startled look which he gave her, full in her face as if it had been a blow—to his extreme confusion and surprise there stood suddenly before him the woman of the coach door, the woman of his dreams.

### PHOTOGRAPHY IN COLOURS.

EVER since it became possible to obtain a picture by casting an image formed by a lens on a chemical surface sensitive to light, there has existed the idea that such pictures would some day be produced endowed with all the lovely colours of nature. Even the best photograph, it must be admitted, falls very short of the original from which it was taken. In form, in perspective, it is perfect, its one shortcoming being that it is in Monochrome. If we peep beneath a photographer's focussing cloth just before he takes an outdoor picture, we shall see on the ground glass screen of the camera a very beautiful thing; a perfect image in miniature of the landscape clothed in all its natural tints. We can see the same thing on the white table of the Camera Obscura which can still be found at places of holiday resort. The Parisian scene-painter Daguerre used such an appliance to help him in his work, and it is said that his first experiments were prompted by the longing he had to make those fleeting coloured pictures permanent.

Again and again has it been asserted that the problem of photography in the colours of nature was solved. Companies have been formed to purchase secrets which were known only to one man, this individual being generally a seedy adventurer who had nothing to sell—but who recognised the value of that commercial doctrine which teaches that where there is a demand, a supply is sure to follow. Within the past twenty years half a dozen such projects have been brought before public notice; people have believed in them, and have invested their money in them, but we are still as far from Photography in the colours of nature as was Daguerre and his contemporary workers of half a century back.

It is true that advances have been made in the better rendering of coloured objects. That is to say, the photographer is now able by the means which Chemistry has placed at his disposal to render the colours of an object in their true tone relation to one another. Until quite recent years a photograph would reproduce blue as white, yellow and red as black, and would in the same way play havoc with many other colours. But this defect has been now

remedied, and an oil-painting or other coloured object can be reproduced by the camera with the colours expressed by correct gradations much in the same way that a skilful engraver would translate them into Monochrome. We are also no longer bound in a photograph to one or two arbitrary tints, such as black, gray, and purple brown, but can have a photograph produced in any one colour which we may desire. Another forward step is found in the matter of permanence, so that a photograph of to-day need not be the fleeting thing that it once was, but can be made as permanent, at any rate, as the paper upon which it is supported.

But all this progress in the art, satisfactory though it be, brings us no nearer the solution of the problem of photography in the colours of nature. True it is that there are many methods by which photographs are printed in colours, and very effective some of these pictures are, but they employ coloured inks or pigments of some kind, and although they have a photographic foundation, it would be false to describe them as photographs in colour.

In the meantime, as a kind of contribution to the subject, Mr Frederick Ives of Philadelphia has produced a wonderfully clever instrument which he calls the Photochromoscope, by which the images of certain objects appear clothed in as near an approach to natural colouring as it is possible to imagine. In general appearance this instrument resembles the old-fashioned stereoscope, for it has two eyeholes, through which its mysteries are viewed. And mysterious and wonderful do the pictures shown by this apparatus appear to be, for not only are the objects coloured, but they stand out in such relief that it is difficult to realise that one cannot grasp them with the hand. But they cannot be described as photographs in colour, by which is generally meant pictures direct from the camera, in which different parts of the subject reflect to the eye the same tints as are found in the original. For Mr Ives' pictures are but illusions, visionary things which are conjured up by a combination of coloured screens, reflectors, and plain photographs obtained in a special camera. Each picture is in reality made up of six different photographs of the same object—their images being combined into one by the help of the reflectors and with the further aid of the eyes which view them. The pictures for this instrument are produced in a special form of camera, the manipulation of which will present no great difficulty. It resembles the camera used for stereoscopic work in that it has twin lenses, but here nearly all resemblance to an ordinary camera ends. It takes on one plate simultaneously three pairs of pictures, one pair selecting from the original all the red portions of the subject, another pair picking out the blue-violet portions, and the remaining pair dealing with the green parts. This is managed by coloured screens and reflectors which allow only rays of certain colours to pass them, and as a result there are produced three pairs of negatives of the same subject, each different and incomplete.

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From these negative pictures positives are printed on a duplicate plate of the same size, and when these are finished and dry, the plate is cut across twice with a diamond, so that the pairs are separated into three distinct stereoscopic pictures.

We have now, so to speak, a dissected picture. We have pulled the original to pieces and have sorted out its colours into their component parts. But it must be distinctly understood that our paired positives exhibit no colour whatever; they are in sober gray, black, and white, like the ordinary product of the camera, but all the same the image in each case represents a certain colour sensation, red, green, or blue violet as the case may be; and on these plates too are registered the mixed colours of the original, each plate analysing the tints and picking out its own part of the compound colour.

According to the old theory of Brewster, the colours of the spectrum can be sorted out into primaries, secondaries, &c., the three primary colours being Red, Yellow, and Blue, the mixture of any two of these primaries producing a secondary tint, which is complimentary to the remaining primary. Thus we may mingle blue and yellow, and produce green, which is complimentary to the primary which we have left untouched—namely, red. Or we may mix red and yellow to make orange, which is complimentary to blue; or red and blue to make purple, which is complimentary to yellow. And the theory is correct so far as mere pigments are concerned, as any one can ascertain for himself by the help of a child's paint-box. But when we come to experiment with the pure light from the spectrum itself the theory falls to pieces. It was Young who first pointed out that all colour phenomena could be accounted for, by supposing that the retinal nerves were of three kinds, each being sensitive to a particular colour, one set of nerves being excited by blue violet, another by red, and the third by green, a mixed colour such as yellow exciting both the red and the green nerves in certain definite proportions. Young's theory remained in abeyance until Helmholtz and Maxwell confirmed his results, with the result that it is now generally admitted that if there be three primary colours they must be red, green, and dark blue or violet.

Mr Ives has kept the Young-Helmholtz theory constantly in view while working out the details of his Photochromoscope, and it must be admitted that practice has in this case borne out the truth of theory in a very satisfactory manner. The three pairs of photographs, obtained in the manner already described, are framed in a flexible holder so that they fold over, and embrace three sides of the Photochromoscope, which are furnished with glasses of the necessary tints. Each photograph absorbs its own proper colour sensation; and these are combined upon the retina by means of reflectors, each one adding its quota of colour to the combined picture.

A few decades back a stereoscope and its double pictures could be found in every drawing-room, and visitors never seemed to tire of looking at the resemblance to solid things

thereby produced. The Photochromoscope gives the same excellent effects with the added charm of colour, and we may presume that possibly these improved pictures may become as popular as their plain predecessors. It seems certain at any rate that by means of the special camera, which will be presently introduced, any amateur photographer of intelligence will be able to take the triple negatives, and from them can prepare 'Chromograms' for insertion in the new instrument. The process is at present only applicable to such objects as will bear a somewhat long exposure; for what is commonly known as instantaneous work, it is inadmissible.

## POLITICS AND THE MAY-FLY.

By JOHN BUCHAN, Author of *Sir Quixote*, &c.

THE farmer of Clachlands was a Tory, stern and unbending. It was the tradition of his family, from his grandfather, who had been land-steward to Lord Manorwater, down to his father, who had once seconded a vote of confidence in the sitting member. Such traditions, he felt, were not to be lightly despised; things might change, empires might wax and wane, but his obligation continued; a sort of perverted *noblesse oblige* was the farmer's watchword in life; and by dint of much energy and bad language, he lived up to it.

As fate would have it, the Clachlands ploughman was a Radical of Radicals. He had imbibed his opinions early in life from a speaker on the green of Marchthorn, and ever since, by the help of a weekly penny paper and an odd volume of Gladstone's speeches, had continued his education. Such opinions in a conservative country-side carry with them a reputation for either abnormal cleverness or abnormal folly. The fact that he was a keen fisher, a famed singer of songs, and the best judge of horses in the place, caused the verdict of his neighbours to incline to the former, and he passed for something of an oracle among his fellows. The blacksmith, who was the critic of the neighbourhood, summed up his character in a few words. 'Him,' said he in a tone of mingled dislike and admiration, 'him! He would sweer white was black the morn, and dod! he would prove it tae.'

It so happened in the early summer, when the land was green, and the trout plashed in the river, that Her Majesty's Government saw fit to appeal to an intelligent country. Among a people whose politics fight hard with their religion for a monopoly of their interests, feeling ran high and brotherly kindness departed. Houses were divided against themselves. Men formerly of no consideration found themselves suddenly important, and discovered that their intellects and conscience, which they had hitherto valued at little, were things of serious interest to their betters. The lurid light of publicity was shed upon the lives of the rival candidates; men formerly accounted worthy and respectable

were proved no better than whited sepulchres; and each man was filled with a morbid concern for his fellow's character and beliefs.

The farmer of Clachlands called a meeting of his labourers in the great dusty barn, which had been the scene of many similar gatherings. His speech on the occasion was vigorous and to the point. 'Ye are a' my men,' he said, 'an' I'll see that ye vote richt. Ye're uneducated folk, and ken naething about the matter, sae ye just tak' my word for't, that the Tories are in the richt and vote accordingly. I've been a guid maister to ye, and it's shurely better to plesure me, than a wheen leein' scoondrels whae tramp the country wi' leather bags and printit trash.'

Then arose from the back the ploughman, strong in his convictions. 'Listen to me, you men,' says he: 'just vote as ye think best. The maister's a guid maister, as he says, but he's nocht to dae wi' your votin'. It's what they ca' intemediation to interfere wi' onybody in this matter. So mind that, an' vote for the workin'-man an' his richts.'

Then ensued a war of violent words.

'Is this a meetin' in my barn, or a penny-waddin'?

'Ca't what ye please. I canna let ye mislead the men.'

'Whae talks about misleadin'? Is't misleadin' to lead them richt?'

'The question,' said the ploughman solemnly, 'is what you ca' richt.'

'William Laverhope, if ye werena a guid plooman, ye wad gang post-haste oot o' here the morn.'

'I carena what ye say. I'll stand up for the richts o' thae men.'

'Men,' this with deep scorn. 'I could mak better men than thae wi' a stick oot o' the plantin'.'

'Ay, ye say that noo, an' the morn ye'll be ca'in' ilka yin o' them *Mister*, a' for their votes.'

The farmer left in dignified disgust, vanquished but still dangerous; the ploughman in triumph mingled with despair. For he knew that his fellow-labourers cared not a whit for politics, but would follow to the letter their master's bidding.

The next morning rose clear and fine. There had been a great rain for the past few days, and the burns were coming down broad and surly. The Clachlands Water was chafing by bank and bridge and threatening to enter the hay-field, and every little ditch and sheep-drain was carrying its tribute of peaty water to the greater flood. The farmer of Clachlands, as he looked over the landscape from the doorstep of his dwelling, marked the state of the weather and pondered over it.

He was not in a pleasant frame of mind that morning. He had been crossed by a ploughman, his servant. He liked the man, and so the obvious way of dealing with him—by making things uncomfortable or turning him off—was shut against him. But he burned to get the upperhand of him, and discomfit once for all one who had dared to question his wisdom

and good sense. If only he could get him to vote on the other side—but that was out of the question. If only he could keep him from voting—that was possible but unlikely. He might forcibly detain him, in which case he would lay himself open to the penalties of the law, and be nothing the gainer. For the victory which he desired was a moral one, not a triumph of force. He would like to circumvent him by cleverness, to score against him fairly and honourably on his own ground. But the thing was hard, and, as it seemed to him at the moment, impossible.

Suddenly, as he looked over the morning landscape, a thought struck him and made him slap his legs and chuckle hugely. He walked quickly up and down the gravelled walk. 'Losh, it's guid. I'll dae't. I'll dae't, if the weather juist hauds.'

His unseemly mirth was checked by the approach of some one who found the farmer engaged in the minute examination of gooseberry leaves. 'I'm concerned about thae busses,' he was saying; 'they've been ill lookit to, an' we'll no hae half a crop.' And he went off, still smiling, and spent a restless forenoon in the Marchthorn market.

In the evening he met the ploughman, as he returned from the turnip-singling, with his hoe on his shoulder. The two men looked at one another with the air of those who know that all is not well between them. Then the farmer spoke with much humility.

'I maybe spoke rayther severe yestreen,' he said. 'I hope I didna hurt your feelings.'

'Na, na! No me!' said the ploughman airily.

'Because I've been thinking ower the maitter, an' I admit that a man has a richt to his ain thochts. A'budy should hae principles an' stick to them,' said the farmer, with the manner of one making a recondite quotation.

'Ay,' he went on, 'I respect ye, William, for your consistency. Ye're an example to us a'.'

The other shuffled and looked unhappy. He and his master were on the best of terms, but these unnecessary compliments were not usual in their intercourse. He began to suspect, and the farmer, who saw his mistake, hastened to change the subject.

'Graund weather for the fishin',' said he.

'Oh, is it no?' said the other, roused to excited interest by this home topic. 'I tell ye by the morn they'll be takin' as they've never ta'en this year. Doon in the big pool in the Clachlands Water, at the turn o' the turnip-field, there are twae or three pounders, and aiblins yin o' twae pund. I saw them mysel' when the water was low. It's ower big the noo, but when it gangs doon the morn, and gets the colour o' porter, I'se warrant I could whup them oot o' there wi' the flee.'

'D'ye say sae,' said the farmer sweetly. 'Weel, it's a lang time since I tried the fishin', but I yince was keen on't. Come in bye, William; I've something ye might like to see.'

From a corner he produced a rod, and handed it to the other. It was a very fine rod indeed, one which the owner had gained in a fishing competition many years before,

and treasured accordingly. The ploughman examined it long and critically. Then he gave his verdict. 'It's the bravest rod I ever saw, wi' a fine hickory butt, an' guid greenheart tap and middle. It wad cast the sma'est flee, and haud the biggest troot.'

'Weel,' said the farmer, genially smiling, 'ye have a half-holiday the morn when ye gang to the poll. There'll be plenty o' time in the evening to try a cast wi't. I'll lend it ye for the day.'

The man's face brightened. 'I wad tak it verra kindly,' he said, 'if ye wad. My ain yin is no muckle worth, and, as ye say, I'll hae time for a cast the morn's nicht.'

'Dinna mention it. Did I ever let ye see my flee-book? Here it is,' and he produced a thick flannel book from a drawer. 'There's a maist miscellaneous collection, for a' waters an' a' weathers. I got a heap o' them frae auld Lord Manorwater, when I was a laddie, and used to carry his basket.'

But the ploughman heeded him not, being deep in the examination of its mysteries. Very gingerly he handled the tiny spiders and hackles, surveying them with the eye of a connoisseur.

'If there's anything there ye think at a' like the water, I'll be verra pleased if ye'll try't.'

The other was somewhat put out by this extreme friendliness. At another time he would have refused shamefacedly, but now the love of sport was too strong in him. 'Ye're far over guid,' he said; 'thae twae patrick wings are the verra things I want, an' I dinna think I've ony at hame. I'm awfu' gratefu' to ye, an' I'll bring them back the morn's nicht.'

'Guid-en,' said the farmer, as he opened the door, 'an' I wish ye may hae a guid catch.' And he turned in again, smiling sardonically.

The next morning was like the last, save that a little wind had risen, which blew freshly from the west. White cloudlets drifted across the blue, and the air was as clear as spring-water. Down in the hollow the roaring torrent had sunk to a full, lipping stream, and the colour had changed from a turbid yellow to a clear, delicate brown. In the town of Marchthorn, it was a day of wild excitement, and the quiet Clachlands road bustled with horses and men. The labourers in the fields scarce stopped to look at the passers, for in the afternoon they too would have their chance, when they might journey to the town in all importance, and record their opinions of the late Government.

The ploughman of Clachlands spent a troubled forenoon. His nightly dreams had been of landing great fish, and now his waking thoughts were of the same. Politics for the time were forgotten. This was the day which he had looked forward to for so long, when he was to have been busied in deciding doubtful voters, and breathing activity into the ranks of his cause. And lo! the day had come and found his thoughts elsewhere. For all such things are, at the best, of fleeting interest, and do not stir men otherwise than sentimentally; but the old kindly love of field-sports, the joy in the smell of the earth and the living air, lie very close to a man's heart. So this apostate, as he cleaned his turnip rows, was filled with the

excitement of the sport, and had no thoughts above the memory of past exploits and the anticipation of greater to come.

Mid-day came, and with it his release. He roughly calculated that he could go to the town, vote, and be back in two hours, and so have the evening clear for his fishing. There had never been such a day for the trout in his memory, so cool and breezy and soft, nor had he ever seen so glorious a water. 'If ye dinna get a fou basket the nicht, an' a feed the morn, William Laverhope, your richt hand has forgot its cunning,' said he to himself.

He took the rod carefully out, put it together, and made trial casts on the green. He tied the flies on a cast and put it ready for use in his own primitive fly-book, and then bestowed the whole in the breast-pocket of his coat. He had arrayed himself in his best, with a white rose in his button-hole, for it behoved a man to be well dressed on such an occasion as voting. But yet he did not start. Some fascination in the rod made him linger and try it again and again.

Then he resolutely laid it down and made to go. But something caught his eye—the swirl of the stream as it left the great pool at the hay-field, or the glimpse of still, gleaming water. The impulse was too strong to be resisted. There was time enough and to spare. The pool was on his way to the town, he would try one cast ere he started, just to see if the water was good. So, with rod on his shoulder, he set off.

Somewhere in the background a man, who had been watching his movements, turned away, laughing silently, and filling his pipe.

A great trout rose to the fly in the hay-field pool, and ran the line up-stream till he broke it. The ploughman swore deeply, and stamped on the ground with aggravation. His blood was up, and he prepared for battle. Carefully, skillfully he fished, with every nerve on tension and ever-watchful eyes. Meanwhile, miles off in the town the bustle went on, but the eager fisherman by the river heeded it not.

Late in the evening, just at the darkening, a figure arrayed in Sunday clothes, but all wet and mud-stained, came up the road to the farm. Over his shoulder he carried a rod, and in one hand a long string of noble trout. But the expression on his face was not triumphant; a settled melancholy overspread his countenance, and he groaned as he walked.

Mephistopheles stood by the garden-gate, smoking and surveying his fields. A well-satisfied smile hovered about his mouth, and his air was the air of one well at ease with the world.

'Weel, I see ye've had guid sport,' said he to the melancholy Faust. 'By-the-by, I didna notice ye in the town. And losh! man, what in the world have ye dune to your guid claes?'

The other made no answer. Slowly he took the rod to pieces and strapped it up; he took the fly-book from his pocket; he selected two fish from the heap; and laid the whole before the farmer.

'There ye are,' said he, 'and I'm verra

much obliged to ye for your kindness.' But his tone was one of desperation and not of gratitude; and his face, as he went onward, was a study in eloquence repressed.

### 'HARVEYISED' STEEL ARMOUR FOR THE NAVY.

PUBLIC attention has, of late, been keenly directed to the British navy, and the estimates recently advanced for its augmentation; causing the memorandum, issued by the First Lord of the Admiralty, to be scanned with even more than the usual interest. Turning to the section of that document dealing with 'Ordnance and armour plate,' we learn that during the past year 'various experimental armour plates have been submitted for purpose of trial. None of these, however, have as yet shown qualities equal to those possessed by the "Harveyised" steel armour at present used. Consequently, armour of that description is still being contracted for.'

In view of the large amount of 'Harveyised' steel being now turned out, we purpose laying before our readers some succinct account of this new material, its special properties and advantages, concluding with some brief remarks on its manufacture.

The Harvey process is one by which low grade or soft steel is converted, at moderate cost, into material possessing great decremental hardness on its face—namely, intense hardness is produced on the surface of an otherwise soft plate; the advantage of such treatment being that great resistance to penetration is secured, with an almost total absence of cracking. Had the armour plate the same intense hardness throughout as its surface, it would shatter and crack on being struck by a projectile, whereas by hardening only the face, the resistance to penetration of the face is combined with the tenacity and resistance to crack of the back, and the happy combination of great tenacity against shot, and no danger of splitting or shattering (hitherto deemed inseparable from very great hardness), is attained.

The 'Harveyising' of plates is performed by taking ordinary armour plates and planing one surface. The plate is then placed in a special furnace, with the planed surface upwards, and covered with a layer of animal charcoal, equal in thickness to itself; another plate is then laid with its planed surface downwards on the animal charcoal, which thus forms a sandwich between the two armour plates. Both plates are then completely covered in sand, and the furnace being closed, heat is applied, and maintained at a uniform temperature of some eighteen hundred degrees Fahrenheit, for about a fortnight, during which the charcoal gradually yields up its carbon to the plates, imparting to their surfaces great hardness; about a week elapses before cooling is sufficiently advanced to enable the plates to be removed, and nothing then remains, but machining and the subsequent process of chilling, for their completion. Simple as this process may appear in general outlines, its practical application is far from being unattended with difficulties in actual execution;

not the least of which consists in maintaining a constant and uniform heat for a fortnight. For this purpose, tubes pass beneath the lower plate, right through the furnace, and permit rods about half an inch in diameter to be inserted from each side, and the temperature taken by pyrometers.

The furnaces themselves call for some passing comment. Built of firebrick, with iron stay bars, according to the size of plate to be dealt with, they are furnished with a firebrick floor to carry the plates, the heat from coal fires passing over the plates, thence returning through flues beneath the floor to the chimney. The plates are lowered into the furnace, and removed from it by an overhead 'traveller' commanding the site.

The progress of 'Harveyising' has been as rapid as it is remarkable, England possessing three works and Scotland one work where the process is carried on. Her Majesty's ships *Renown*, *Majestic*, and *Magnificent* are equipped with 'Harveyised' steel armour, and further large orders are under execution.

Foreign nations are also utilising the new process, France, Germany, and Austria having extensive works fitted for its production. The United States Government also manufacture the armour; going further a-field, Japan is using the plates for her battleships. Meanwhile, official experiments by the governments of Great Britain, the United States, France, and Russia, leave no doubt as to the great value of Harveyised armour. Enough has been said to justify the conclusion of the official report: 'The consequence of adopting this new system (that is, "Harveyising") will be a great saving in cost for a given defence. By means of these improvements the power of defence obtainable with certain thicknesses and weights of armour has been very greatly increased, and this circumstance must considerably affect the designs of battleships to be laid down in the future.'

### AFTER SUNSET.

ONE tremulous star above the deepening west;  
The plash of waves upon a quiet beach;  
A sleepy twitter from some hidden nest  
Amidst the clustered ivy, out of reach.

The sheep-bell's tinkle from the daisied leas;  
The rhythmic fall of homeward-wending feet;  
A wail that croons amongst the leafy trees,  
And dies away in whispers faint and sweet.

A pale young moon, whose slender silver bow  
Creeps slowly up beyond the purple hill;  
And seems to absorb the golden afterglow  
Within the far horizon lingering still.

An open lattice and the scent of musk;  
Then, through the slumbrous hush of earth and sky,  
A tender mother-voice that in the dusk  
Sings to a babe some old-world lullaby.

E. MATHESON.

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